



*Office of Public Affairs
U.S. Embassy, Wellington*

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**U.S. announces worldwide introduction of e-Passport requirement for all new
passports being used under the U.S. Visa Waiver Program**

From today, October 26, 2006, U.S. authorities will require all those visitors with newly-issued passports wishing to travel on the U.S. Visa Waiver Program to have an ‘e-Passport.’ An e-Passport is one that carries an embedded electronic chip containing biometric data on the passport-holder. This change will have very little impact on current New Zealand passport-holders.

Since November 1 2005, all new passports issued in New Zealand meet this e-Passport requirement, so this requirement is not expected to cause any major disruption. The U.S. Visa Waiver Program allows eligible New Zealand passport holders to travel to the United States without a visa. New Zealanders who hold passports issued on or after October 26, 2006, will need to show an e-Passport to gain entry under the Visa Waiver Program.

Any traveler on the Visa Waiver Program who has an older, machine-readable passport with digital photo will still be able to use that passport until it expires, without the need for obtaining a visa. Most New Zealand passport-holders will fall into this category.

Similarly, Emergency Travel Documents will still be valid for visa-free travel to the United States, up until the date of their expiry (normally a maximum of one year). Emergency Travel Documents are usually issued by New Zealand diplomatic missions overseas.

A small number of manually-issued New Zealand passports, which pre-date even the machine-readable version, are still in circulation – holders of these passports are not eligible to enter the USA on the Visa Waiver Program and will continue to require a visa.

It is important to note that this e-Passport requirement applies only to passport holders of countries, like New Zealand, that are currently involved in the U.S. Visa Waiver Program. Passport holders from countries that are not part of the U.S. Visa Waiver Program, such as Samoa, will be unaffected by this change. Samoan passport holders will continue to need a visa in order to visit the United States.

Further information on the Visa Waiver Program is available from the Visa Services section of the US Embassy website at: http://newzealand.usembassy.gov/visa_services.html and the New Zealand Government Department of Internal Affairs website at: http://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/wpg_URL/Whats-new-Passports-Visa-Waiver-Index?OpenDocument.